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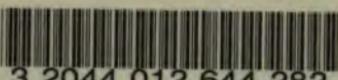
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James, C. P. James

George Summer Esq.

With respects of Ch. P. James

C. P. J.

ORATION AND POEM,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

CINCINNATI LITERARY CLUB,

JULY 4TH, 1853.

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

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ORATION BY CHARLES P. JAMES. POEM BY C. A. L. RICHARDS.

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ORATION.

THE AMERICAN MAN OF LETTERS.

We have heard the old memorable words once more. They have been thus repeated, every year, for more than three-quarters of a century; and still we find them the most impressive ever uttered by this nation. The most impressive, not merely because they are wise, but because no other expression from a people is comparable with its deliberate, conscious announcement of its own advent. Since the coming of One above all peoples, no event has been so solemn as the coming of this people, with its new work, upon the earth.

While this announcement lingers on the ear, recalling the scenes in which it was made, we are impelled, if we speak at all, to speak only of the virtue which dared to utter it, in the presence of so many perils. But we are now in the midst of the new work which was then foretold; and the spirit, which inspired that prophecy, bids us rather to consider the task which lies before ourselves, than linger in the past.

On that day, our one great deed, our whole history, was the single fact that we existed; that we, who in the night

were nothing, were in the morning a nation. Our future and our work were uncertain; nothing but our independent existence was clear. Now, when only part of a swift century has passed, the purpose of that existence has unfolded, and the vast means of its accomplishment press upon us faster than we learn their use.

We, who then scarce lined the margin of one ocean, now stretch to the margin of another, across an intervening world. One of the grievances, which provoked our separation, was an import tax upon the simplest manufactures; now all the streams of the north are throbbing with creative toil, and we supply luxury to nations that were old ere we began. The fields around us were known only as the land of death; now they send the very bread of life to other lands. The forests were impassable, save to the Indian; we fly through them now, toward the setting sun, swifter than did his arrow once. Rivers, not known even to the learned geographer then, freight now great fleets with the products of their shores. All climates, all soils, all metals, all materials of physical power, has God given to this people; and every year He hastens, from the old world, vast migrations of brave workers, to help us deal with these materials. But yesterday we fancied that nature had set our home apart, in the seclusion of the two great oceans, that we might remain disentangled forever from the old world's ties,—and, even while we dreamed only of self-protection, we

are to-day one of the great powers of the earth, and are implored to help nations of that old world, who were illustrious and independent ere we existed. Why the very eagles that ~~walked~~ above our first battle might be living !

Shall we imagine that all this swift accumulation and development has been wrought, that it might simply be enjoyed ? Have such means been furnished for the first time so suddenly, and entrusted to the first democratic people that has existed on so large a scale, without obligations, which are to be also for the first time fulfilled ? Does this altogether new experience promise no new destiny ? Does this combination of elements, never before brought together, offer no new problems in national life ?

Let us be assured that questions hitherto unsolved are to be answered here. But let us be as well assured that all this amazing prosperity is not the sufficient answer which they demand. To attain the ends for which men are formed into peoples, the ends of nationality, something more than prosperity is needful. Nothing that grows from man was ever developed by man, either single handed or in multitudes, save by many efforts, renewed patiently amid suffering. Above all, the true manhood of democracy can be attained, only when it has learned, as a part of self-government, the power of self-denial. To the less fortunate world around us we make our happiness a boast ; but a few short years will explain that we are resting only to grow strong, and growing strong only to be ready for

our task. The fulness of the present hour seems almost to dispense with prudence, its peace with watchfulness, its content with regulation; but even in this very hour, the statesmen, the writers, the preachers, all the thinkers of the land, would be wise to remind us of the future, and to consider for us what we are to do with these marvelous resources, whence shall come our trial, and how we are to prepare for it. That it must come, I believe to be inevitable; but, without national vanity, I will add, that such a belief is not discouraging to me. I can not think that this great structure has been a splendid preparation for a failure.

The wide field to which these questions point, is one which I shall not presume to traverse. Only a single inquiry I shall ask you to consider—an inquiry to which I am directed by the nature of the company assembled here. What, amid all these elements, will be the office of the American man of letters? With what duties will he be charged by the wants of this people?

Perhaps I should use some broader designation; for by men of letters I mean all men who spend some portion of their time in the fields of pure thought, and afterward, in whatever form, impart to others the results of their labor; and to this guild belong, in their degree, not merely the writers of books and their critics, but the lecturer, the journalist, the preacher, the college-professor, the occasional orator. In the midst of this great multitude they

are but few, indeed, but, as they undertake to mould their fellows, they owe to the whole people a duty of the most serious importance.

Men of active life, as we call them, are slow to recognize the power of this small body ; but experience has proved that it can hardly be over estimated. In the person of the Bramin it has been the tyrant of the Hindoo for ages. The same class, which constitutes now the men of letters, compelled the quick mind of Egypt to mummy its beliefs, and the rebellious heart of the Jew to obey. To Greece it gave heroism, and philosophy, and art, and then helped to corrupt the life it had inspired. To Rome it gave both its republican and its imperial thought. In the white robes of the Druid it made the wild Celt tremble ; and in the cossack of the Roman priest it rebuked emperors, protected the people, and led Europe on its crusade of self-emancipation. It drove France to revolution, as much as did the misery of the people ; and, finally, in our own great struggle, it was this same power which vitalized the spirit of the country, when it would have failed. To the workers in thought, then, we shall assign by no means too high a place, when we say that it will be their office, even more than it will be the soldier's, to watch for, and be first to encounter, the enemies of this people.

Their work lies already about them ; but I speak rather of the future, because the long shadows cast upon it by the present, may help us best to measure its extent. And

first of all, they will have to match their strength with the very prosperity in which we rejoice.

Of course I do not mean, by this contest, an idle war upon wealth, or homilies, as idle, upon its temptations and abuse. Simply it is their charge that, as the rich will be a power in the land, the men of thought shall be a power also.

What height this country's wealth will gather to, in the next century, no man can predict; but, if it be multiplied a thousand fold, it will not enrich the mass. The law of its distribution will remain unaltered, because the law of the distribution of human faculties will be unaltered; it will be the few, who have the talent for acquisition, and for the conduct of affairs, who will be richer; the multitude will still live by their daily toil. Colossal fortunes, such as we now have no instances of, will grow up, and the disparity of conditions will be ~~be~~ immeasurably increased. Then these huge properties will ~~be~~ require permanence. They will be transferred from trade to the surer basis of land investments, and, though we shall have no primogeniture to guard them, they will be kept undivided by the act of their owners. As soon as wealth shall have become the great landlord, its power will be intensified; for the lands of every country, in all ages, have been the strongest elements of social power. In that day, then, the master of fifty or an hundred millions will bear a relation to the rest of society, which no man bears at present.

When such properties shall have remained long in the

same families, the rich will be *a class*, in a sense not known to us now. Growing from their cradles in an atmosphere of their own, and born of parents who so lived before them, they will differ radically from the laboring multitude. Numerous enough to constitute a society, they will, even without premeditation, acquire an organized movement and tone. They will be marked by very much stronger, and by nobler, traits than now. They will have characteristic sentiments; a generosity and a narrowness of their own. They will be adorned by fine and graceful cultivation, and will be too ready to undervalue all culture which is neither fine nor graceful. Having no badges of rank to distinguish them, they will naturally mark their social place by the use of their wealth, and their abodes and their luxury will be such as we have not yet dreamt of. Perhaps the world has never seen a class of men whose outward life has appeared so splendid as must hereafter be the life of the great rich in this democratic country.

But this process will separate the hearts of the rich and the hearts of the multitude, until antagonism will be their chief relation. The political aristocracy of Britain holds an hereditary power by the occasional generous use of which they can win the admiration and affection of the people; but our social aristocracy can offer no such compensation for their daily offense of being an aristocracy at all. Individuals among them will be trusted; but, so long as our present system shall endure, they will in their char-

acter of a class, have no field of service, and can earn no place in the people's confidence. Every great social power, for which no place is provided in the political system of a country, comes into collision with that system, whether it be democratic or despotic; and, if ~~this~~^{the} life were even spotless, it would be watched with distrust by the other social powers, which had secured a political recognition. Everything, then, will hereafter impel the people, who, as such, have this recognition, to exclude our future aristocracy of wealth from participation in public affairs. What so proud a class shall find themselves unable to share, they will unaffectedly despise; the voter and his offices will be held cheap alike, and contempt for democracy will grow to be their settled and avowed conviction.

And yet these results, if no worse followed, might be anticipated with some degree of indifference. We might with little concern, behold this banyan tree turning forever from the heavens, and clinging with new hands to the earth beneath it, if it cast no shadow upon the people. But, alas, the attractive and unattainable splendors of vast wealth will subject our poor humanity to the saddest trials. Money will not preach its gospel in vain. To establish the great rich ~~family~~ as one social class, is to establish the multitude as another; and it can not establish classes, without teaching also a doctrine of classification; a doctrine in which classes will too easily be recognized as grades. Transition from one of these to the other will, of
firnly

course, still be possible; but such transition is the very act of leaving old things behind, and carries few ties or sympathies in its passage. The sons of the people will not sit down among the great rich, to remain sons of the people; and the very multitude will say, as they do already on such occasions, that genius has worked its way from a humbler to a higher sphere. With these rare detachments from one body to the other, their lives will seldom mingle, and the true freedom and manhood of each will be restricted by the line of separation. Looking across the limitations of their own daily tasks, the people will observe that the life of the rich is not only splendid, but gives power to achieve, inspires the individual with an assured, unhesitating will, and unfolds graces which long use or rare genius only can attain; and they will find it hard to go on believing that the equality of man is independent of classes; that the individual man is first, and all circumstances but secondary. Unless some other power shall stand up by the side of wealth, and, by example as striking, reassure them of their instincts, they will merge the individual in his class, and their genuine faith in the value of men, as men, will finally be lost.

Here, then, is the great work of our men of letters, our men of thought. They alone, in that future state of things, can assert before the people a social equality with the great rich; they alone will occupy a standing ground, from which they can demonstrate that the individual, with

his indestructible powers, is still the strongest of all forces. By asserting their personality, by freeing themselves from class opinion, and thinking and speaking, each man of them, his own thought, they will vindicate the liberty of the individual for the whole people. If in their own lives they shall cherish this right of thought and utterance, this full, free, personal existence, as the highest of all social rights, the people also will appreciate them as the highest. Every man who reposes upon what is indestructible in himself, "containing his soul in patience," dealing with circumstance as it is, but retaining the integrity of his being in spite of it and above it, teaches all who look upon him to reverence their lives also. What lesson, then, may not the man of letters, the teacher of the people, impress upon their hearts, by his own emancipation? If his guidance be true, they can, by following, resume their station, and the wealth, which threatens to overshadow them, will bear to them some true relation. Let them only, by self-culture, develop the power of the individual, and his subordination to property and to social grades will be averted. The consciousness of fuller manhood will renew their faith in manhood, and they will rejoice that they are indeed the people.

I have endeavored not to overstate the tendencies which I have attempted to sketch. If I have not done so, the beginning of the service of our American man of letters is, to vindicate individualism. We shall find, I think,

that in every social or political trial which appears to threaten the country, his work is still the same.

The next power with which he will have to measure strength, or rather, I think, the first, in point of time, is our majority system.

I shall hardly be understood, I presume, to speak disrespectfully of the system itself; for it is the very law of our existence, and it were as wise to discuss the propriety of breath, as to consider its adaptation to our plan. But under the pretext of this true principle we outrage democracy by sins too absurd and too mean to be endured. The temptation to commit them steals upon us before we are aware, and is so mingled with the very use of our democratic rights, that nothing but constant watchfulness and resolute individualism can separate the evil from the good.

The theory of determining events by suffrage makes it the duty of each man, while he enjoys the perfect expression of his own wish, to leave to others the same right in all its fullness. In its absolute perfection it would be an inductive process, for ascertaining the will of the community, and no fact which belongs to it must be suppressed; into it must enter the genuine vote of every voter. In strict compliance with the spirit of this scheme, it should be the ultimate object of each person, simply to contribute his wish; and, for the attainment of this ultimate object,

his vote is his instrumentality. But, inasmuch as we are always selfish, our poor practice never observes the bounds of this theory, and we propose to ourselves, not to assist at an inductive process, for ascertaining the will of the community, but to make a conquest of that will. We propose, not a simple contribution of our opinion, but that, if it be possible, our particular opinion shall prevail. To every voter thus disposed, it becomes, of course, an immediate object, that the party with which he acts shall be the majority; and its corporate strength, instead of his single vote, is the instrumentality which he proposes to employ. He rests not upon his own feet, but sets himself to accumulate the strength of his corporation, and to confirm its unity and adhesion.

Perhaps one of the doctrines of his policy is the rights of men as opposed to property; in a word, the rights of individualism. Straightway, to carry his faith into measures, he devotes himself to the construction of an association which shall be irresistible; he clothes it with personality; he concedes to it, and claims for it, rights of its own, which are not the rights of any individual within it; he demands conformity from all its members; he rebukes divergent opinions; he punishes apostacy,—and all the time knows not that he devotes his energy and zeal to the paradoxical labor of suppressing individualism and depreciating the value of men.

The lesson which we learn in politics, we remember

with a sad tenacity elsewhere. The passion for acting in masses pursues us, and whatever be the mass to which we adhere, its collective power is still cherished with reverence or pride. If there be a vice to reform, we organize a solemn society, and in the number of its branches soon forget its root. We erect a temple, wherein we may worship in the humility of weakness : at once it is a part of our church's value, that it is numerous and strong. In all departments of life, still seeking strength, we seize upon the living reed and bind it in dead *fasces*; substituting classes for men, and making all forms of association corporate.

I do not pretend to doubt that this disposition was given by nature, and therefore for wise purposes ; but it is not for that reason the less dangerous so to exceed its wholesome limits. We have never done so with impunity. Everywhere this mass power has enforced the same demands, requiring always the subordination of the individual. With threats, with the charge of insincerity, with ridicule, with sneers, it mounts as readily the pulpit as the stump, prepared to force conviction and chastise all heresy. Woe to the apostate democrat,—for this is our representative party,—woe to the apostate who is not sound on the currency ; for only by the corruption of his heart can his intellect have been convinced ! Woe to the unhappy churchman who questions so much as the hem upon the mantle of his faith ; and worse than woe to the

advocate of manly and honorable temperance, who looks with hope to the vintage of these hills ! With the trimmer, though he be gifted as Halifax himself, we will have no fellowship ; either he is of us, or against us ; and that he may be of us, he must perfectly conform.

I trust I shall not be understood to mean that an independent man, in order to right himself, should abandon his old political friends, upon every conflict of opinion, and seek other candidates than theirs ; or that he should leave his church, because he doubts some tenet of its faith. In either case it is often the wiser and the nobler course, to act with his old associates still ; since thus he may achieve the largest practicable good. But it is impossible to confound with this duty of wise patience on his part, an obligation to forego his opinions also, or to withhold their expression ; and the tyrannical meanness of demanding such a surrender of his individuality is only surpassed by the cowardly meanness of conceding it.

An evil which so pervades the people, corrupting politics, debasing the churches, and hardening philanthropy, will not easily be dealt with ; but if the men of letters, with their vast power to mould the tone and thought of the community, be but half true to their duty, the only evil which our majority system appears to have brought with it can be cured. If they ask for assurance of success they can find it in experience ; for never has individualism raised its voice courageously and spoken alto-

gether in vain. When here and there a rare editor, without leaving his party, has rebuked its offenses boldly, his words have never fallen to the ground unheeded. When sometimes an emancipated preacher, silenced neither by traditions nor by fear of dismissal, has spoken an unaccustomed truth, he has always found audience and final belief. When Emerson and Whipple, within this very year, read before our people enthusiastic eulogies of grand old England, whose virtues it is patriotism with the majority to deny, some salutary truths sank into their hearts, and will never be forgotten. To this day the pulpits of Boston are closed against Theodore Parker, and booksellers have refused to publish his writings; yet, in spite of all, whether his teachings, in other respects, be true or false, he has taught triumphantly the one great truth, that when individualism is earnest it can always be heard.

Let others but speak as assuredly; let it once become the practice of our men of letters to think with freedom and speak without reserve, and the individual will be rescued from his servile subjection to majorities; while majorities themselves will be restored to the true ground of their rights and their strength. The true grounds, I say, for only when they are aggregates of free individuals, is their claim to submission sacred. When they subordinate and enslave the individual, they are sure at last to play the usurper and tyrant, over the minorities and their own members alike.

The services which I have indicated, as the future duty of the American man of letters, suggest thoughts, somewhat unattractive, perhaps, of conflict and struggle ; the rest of his task affords a pleasanter prospect. He will be, among the people of this wide-spread country, the sympathetic chord, which shall transmit swiftest, through all its members, a common and equal life.

The geographical arrangement of our territory is so marked by form, and soil, and climate, that it can not fail to impress itself plainly upon the character and tone of the inhabitants. With its rim of mountains and connected waters, this continent, as Pulsky has said, lies like a bowl, receiving and gathering toward its center whatever falls within it; its form, no less than our historical tendencies, suggests that it must be the home of one great people. But within the vast area which this one nation will occupy, lie districts whose traits will mark this unity with the sharpest diversity. By her adjustment of our seats, Nature forbids centralization on this continent; the same strong hand which binds us together, promises also to preserve the distinctiveness and integrity of the parts it binds.

New England, for example, seems to have been planned for the home of a manufacturing, constructive people. No spontaneous fruits can be gathered from her hills ; life is impossible, in all her fields, without toil. But the swift streams, rushing from those hills, offer to drive

machinery of unlimited extent, and the capacities of machinery are capable of an indefinite development. Already it is substituted for the human hand, as fast as invention can devise the way; and it is found to work most economically where it is most accumulated. The people of New England, therefore, will work more and more at large establishments and in great bodies; and, as discipline and order are indispensable to such arrangements, they will weave these virtues into the habit and tone of their lives. By their use of machinery, they will be occupied chiefly in swift, accurate processes, where a brief delay or an occasional error may sacrifice large results; hence they will be observant, quick and collected. Their work will cultivate the faculty of silence; they will be speculative, therefore, and their feelings will be less emotional, but more intense.

The achievements of the mechanic have the effect to excite a sense of personal power. If he builds a perfect machine, its excellence is unmistakeable. Its results lie before him, and, unlike the artist or the poet, unlike all who deal with less exact subjects, he knows absolutely that he has succeeded, and feels assured that his success is the work of his own correct thought and cunning hand. He constantly addresses himself to unvarying laws, and learns, by observing their infinite applications and their certainty, to respect most what is capable of precise demonstration. His machinery works out, as it were, at

a single stroke, a prodigious amount of details ; with one mill he supplies some particular want of a great State. Hence the spirit of his invention becomes adventurous. Men fashioned by such influences must be intensely conscious. Their success in reconstructing and adorning the hard, naked world given them to live in, must cause them to appreciate earnestly the realness and importance of this present life, and to value the outward performance of its obligations.

And such a working life promises to cluster towns around the mills of New England, until the masses of her population must be brought under town influences. The presence of a close community will subject each man constantly to the feeling of the community ; while its attritions will excite in him the power of resistance and self-protection.

Without taking account, then, of traits which will go down from the present, by simple inheritance, it seems probable that the New Englander will be led forward, hereafter, in the direction he has already taken. Our American mechanic will still learn from his work, to be orderly, thoughtful, alert and confident. Habituuated to think before he feels, he will be the first to receive all new reforms ; and because he will be trained to prompt action, he will be the first to put conviction into practice. His habit of trusting, in his occupations, to a principle which he finds true, will make him, what he is already, both con-

servative and radical ; he will steadily hold by whatever shall seem to him to rest upon a real fact, and he will often propose to solve at once, by an abstract truth, embarrassing social questions, which will appear to his western brother to demand time and patience. So, too, in the ordinary current of his life, he will be calm and sober; but, from time to time, he will sweep, with a suddenness known only to a community so alive and pressing so upon each other, into extremes of enthusiasm and passion.

Turn now to the fertile district which stretches from our borders westward. What kind of life will its rich soil produce? The soil itself seems to answer best; for the history of its people has been too brief to infer their future from. Their varied elements have not blended and settled yet into those clear traits which continue by descent, and, by their present form, foretell their course; but we may, without a vain pretence of prophecy, picture faintly to ourselves the experiences which such a home is likely to afford, and some of the qualities which those experiences may help to mould.

The natural resources of our western district are various enough to produce broad varieties in the pursuits of its inhabitants ; but their chief business must be agriculture. This great area will be thickly strewn with villages and cities, and its streams will be industrious in manufactures ; but the future traveler, flying upon the swift railway, will pass, from morning to evening, between its orchards, and vineyards, and fields of waving grain.

The soil will still be fertile; for if it suffers from present misuse, science will restore it. But fertile as it may be, its crowding population must of necessity be industrious. Brief periods of rest, however, will break the husbandman's year, and the temper of his life will be less urgent than that of his New England brother. The slower and less exact processes of his labor, too, will not demand the same prompt conclusions nor the same severe faculty of attention; and, when they shall be once performed, he must wait the issues of time and weather. He, too, like the New Englander, must reconstruct his world; but while one will be taught, as it were, to compel results, the other will be taught "to labor and to wait:" in his character, as well as in his work, there will be an undertone of acquiescence. His business will invite experiment, less than either manufactures or trade; for experiments in agriculture look too far into the future for their rewards, to be attractive; our western man will therefore practice, in his annual routine, more prudence and economy than invention. But while his sense of personal ability will not, like that of the New England mechanic, be excited by the contemplation of his own clever devices and their swift success, he will have a deep sense of the power and dignity of his occupation and of his class; because he will believe, as the husbandman always does, that he, of all men, is on man the least dependent. He may be less self-reliant; he will be less conscious, but he will

be always proud. The comparative isolation of his life will make him simple in thought as well as in manner. In the narrow circle of his family and near neighbors, he will be communicative; his feelings will move with his intellect; perchance before it. New social movements, therefore, to win his consent, will need commonly to address, first his affections, and even the best reforms will conquer slowly the prejudices of his sentiment. Besides, a community scattered thus from farm to farm, is, by mere separateness, slower to receive the impulse of new ideas, than one compacted in close towns. These conditions of our western life will sometimes keep us in the rear of true reformation; but they will serve also to subject all schemes of reformation to a salutary test. Planting himself upon his natural base, the earth, our grain-grower will be, among this people, the one great power in repose; the surest element of stability.

But yonder, far southward, beyond the mountains which circle from Carolina to Mississippi, lies another district, to which the eye turns hesitating; for it is a land whose future all men speak of, only to question. Its history has been marked and positive. But some of the traditions of that history are opposed by the feeling of a united world, and it is said that, with such a force to meet, its course hereafter can no longer be argued from its past. If I seem to venture too boldly upon the field of doubt, let me confess in advance, that I feel the uncertainty of my

footing. But I can not doubt that there is a necessary relation between the life of every people and the home in which it dwells, and it is upon what I imagine to be that relation, in the case before us, that I rest, for the present, my own conclusions.

Nature seems to say, that, when one of its present institutions shall have changed, this must still be the land, not of cities, and factories, and trade, but of agriculture. The streams which coil upon its hot surface are too sluggish to turn the water-wheel, and its dark forests will not furnish the fuel which can take the place of that inexpensive agent. But had it both the swift stream and the coal mine, its burning sun would check the quick alertness, and weary the long persistence, which a manufacturing people must possess. It is rather in the fields, which those slow winding streams and that hot sun fertilize, that the people of that country must find their occupation : they, as well as ourselves, must be agriculturists. But the laborer, who shall endure the toil of cultivation there, will differ widely from the laborer of the North or West. He may be white ; he will not be bought and sold; but he will need a peculiar physical temperament and capacity, in order that he may be fitted for his work. If he shall be so adapted, he will bear the marks of his adaptation, and therefore will be a distinct class among the people. They will look upon him as a laborer-breed, and his social position will inevitably be inferior. His occupation in the

fields, bending in dull patience to the heat, will be unfriendly to his development, and, above all, to his versatility. Both of these will be more easily attained by other classes, who will pursue their vocations under the shelter of the roof; and to them, therefore, will the social power of that country belong. If the field laborer shall be such as I have imagined, he will rarely be owner of the soil; the more versatile classes will possess a better talent for acquisition, and therefore will supply the landlords.

What the life of a people in such circumstances would be, we can infer from experience. The landlords will be a thorough aristocracy, and, unlike the aristocracies of our trading districts, they will probably be the most influential body in their community. To the power of land ownership they will add an actual superiority in intellect. In the North, the people, the workers, unwearied by their work, are themselves readers and thinkers, and from among them spring chiefly the men of letters. But in the more enervating climate of the South, physical work of any kind tends to exhaustion, and leaves little temper, when its requirements have ceased, for the vigorous task of thought, such thought as shall affect a people. The landlord of the South, then, promises to be both its man of wealth and its man of letters, and to unite the social power of the two. Below him will range the other classes in the degree that their vocations shall involve physical labor.

In warm climates, as I have intimated, physical activity is apt to be followed by mere rest; from such rest grows one of the distinctest traits of Southern life; a trait which it can hardly fail to preserve. The man of action turns, namely, to the easy recreations of society, and these become, therefore, important and respectable. He becomes a more social person than the man of a cold climate, and companionship is a more frequent necessity of his life. In such a community, the character and opinions of the working part of the people are likely to be formed, more in their hours of intercourse than in their hours of solitude. From a pastime, conversation becomes an effective talent; the talker grows fluent, and ready, and warm, and into his eloquent talk he throws that which, in the more silent North, is expressed only by the pen, and seen only in books. A full expression from within is an absolute human necessity; in such a country as New England this need is satisfied, in a great measure, by literature; in the South, perhaps in an equal measure, by conversation. Nay, the Southern man applies his readier art to the very uses of letters; for he employs it seriously as an instrument of power. By means of it he disseminates his opinions and impresses himself upon society. But conversation rarely attains the clearness and precision of literature, though it may assume its office. It is affected by the magnetism of personal presence, and feeling, or even passion, is more apt to obtrude, where only thought

should speak. Where the thinkers of a community are writers, their thought is corrected in its very utterance ; their audience is the community itself, with all its variety of sympathies and antipathies; and such an audience brings with it a test of truth which informs the speaker, ere he has spoken, when his thought is immoderate or false. But this large standard of the universal is not present to the conversationist; his thought, standing before only an equal power, is not so conscious of its narrowness or its insufficiency. It is hardly necessary to add, that neither the talker nor the listener have the same room for deliberate investigation that the writer and his reader have. Conversation waits not, but urges to its conclusions ; and the opinions of a community, if formed mainly by such a power, are apt to be interwoven with their impulses, and therefore to be neither exact nor true. But if conversation were more exact, and the talker himself more collected and thorough, it is not in personal intercourse that new ideas, distasteful to the community, are most apt to be announced. Intellectual life can not so link itself with purely social action, without submitting itself to social prejudices and weaknesses. With the talker for chief teacher, society must emancipate itself but slowly from the past. It is tempted, rather, to centralize and breed-in its common sentiments.

If, with these limitations upon its life, the South shall hold labor, above all the labor of the field, in contempt, it

will have a sad struggle indeed, in attaining that generous development which should belong to the future of this nation. In a love of the soil and its uses, and in a manly respect for the labors of its cultivation, lies that power which forever renews the youth of old England, the youth of all genuine agricultural countries. Unless a people clasp with love the very feet of Nature, and reverently rest their heads like children on the bosom of their mother earth, their poetry, and music, and art will wait for their inspiration in vain ; life may be fiery and earnest, but not bounding and glad ; intellect may lift a proud front, but its eye will not laugh and be moist with the soft light of humor.

In this hasty survey of our horizon, perhaps I may have misinterpreted the signs of the future ; it may be that neither the North, nor the South, nor the West will be such as I have imagined. But if I am wrong in all the details, the general truth remains none the less certain, that the physical circumstances of a people and the nature of its home, by determining its work and modes of life, must, in a great measure, determine also its character and temper. And if this be true, it is clear that the physical conditions of the three great sections of this country must always impose upon their populations very different tasks, and invite them to extremely different modes of action. Whatever the particular life of each might be, a broad diversity of local character would be the natural

result of such influences. And the causes which would produce this diversity would also produce uniformity within the limits of each. Already this has been their operation, and the longer the hand of circumstance shall press upon the people, the deeper, if it be unresisted, will be its print.

If we were left wholly to our physical training, the great plan of our national life would, in a few short years, be broken and hopelessly marred. The North, and the West, and the South, would turn, each upon its own center, either never touching, or touching but to jar. The railway and the river, it is true, would mingle their populations, but the inner life of a people is not reached by the passing trader. Unless the very intellect and spirit of one people should go forth, by their own proper vehicle and road, to penetrate the valleys and secret recesses of another, the two would be strangers after a thousand years of trade. It is the books, the very thoughts, and beliefs, and hopes, and affections of each, embodied in literature, which alone can so interpenetrate as to join and mingle the living currents of their different lives. Were there no American literature, were there no American men of letters, New England would harden and contract in her towns, the South would return, like its bayous, to its fountain streams, and our own West would come to be one boundless prairie of stupidity.

With such an office to perform, our man of letters

must be no imitator. He must gather in the culture of the wide world, but he must come always back to his own soil and his own house for the true sources of his power. He must be thorough in his knowledge; but in its pursuit must be ever careful that he do not, by solitude and by a vocational spirit, detach himself from his people. If he is to know their life, he must breathe the same air and eat of the food by which it is supported. If he is to speak to their hearts, the instincts and sympathies of his own must be as healthy and active as theirs. He must thoroughly respect the life they have to lead, and all the labors they have to perform. He must, in a word, be the genuine American democrat. Let him only be thus loyal to his work, and the nation will be his audience, and he will be our national man.

P O E M.

“The Club Committee, it behooves you know it,
Have just concluded to appoint you Poet ! ”
Such was the doom, that thundered thro’ the air,
And left its victim, smitten with despair.

Appointed Poet ! Heaven save the mark,
As well appoint me to construct an ark !
Or (tho’ the awkward word may chance to clog our rhythm,)
Ask me to nicely calculate the logarithm,
Expressing the proportions of a line
Drawn from Noah’s ark to Heaven’s rainbow sign !

Appointed Poet ! And the deed was done ;
The fated verses must be straight begun.
With dread of that one step from the sublime,
Lines must be written that shall fairly rhyme ;
And epithets be linked that shall apply,
Such as “the hearing ear,” “the seeing eye,”
In measures fit for sounding minstrelsy.

Behold the instant end of all my peace,
See every cherished occupation cease.

A patient comes ; prescriptions must be writ ;
In need of wisdom, I but think of wit.

I write a letter to a friend I prize,
Quick to the thought a droll allusion flies ;
I save the joke, too precious now to send,
Enrich my poem, and defraud my friend.

With some ingenious Beatrice I talk,
Who pounces on a sentence like a hawk,
And when some favorite fancy I would prove,
Turns inside out my meaning, like a glove ;
Sharp, piercing, teasing, and tormenting, see
The polished weapons of the repartee !
Tipped with a feather from the wing of wit,
See her bright arrows quiver where they hit !
Till, roused to action by the earnest game,
My flashing falchion hovers o'er the dame,
But falls not—prudence moderates my haste,
So smart a figure 'twere a sin to waste ;
I substitute an answer less complete,
Thus gain a couplet, and confess defeat.

Alas ! that such a task my pen should claim,
More fit to write for medicines than fame.
Yet from dark visions of the doctor's life,
From thoughts of rasping saw and keen-edged knife,

From poultice, plaster, powder, potion, pill,
 Of the rich drugs Arabian trees distil,
 Or the mild simple of the neighb'ring hill ;
 From viewing tongues, now red, now ghastly white,
 Now furred with yellow, and now black as night ;
 From pressing hands, that burn with feverish heat,
 From the quick counting of the pulses beat ;
 While friends around with half suspended breath
 Await the augury of life or death,
 While fond devotion stands beside the bed
 To smooth the pillow or support the head ;
 From the strange dreams that haunt the mind insane,
 From the wild frenzies of the tortured brain ;
 From the flushed beauty of the hectic cheek,
 That seems of health and happiness to speak,
 As on his couch the cheered consumptive lies,
 Thinks he grows well, and, convalescing, dies ;
 From scenes like these, how welcome is the change
 To the free poet's unrestricted range,
 Who hears not only writhing manhood's groans,
 But woman's laughter, and sweet childhood's tones ;
 Who turns from Life's last look, and Love's last sigh,
 To meet the glance of mother Nature's eye.

The season smiles, and every heart at ease
 Sings with the birds, or wanders with the breeze ;
 Laughs with the stream along its mossy way,
 Fresh with the verdure of the early May ;

Clings to the earth, in earth's most beauteous bowers,
Or floats to Heaven on the breath of flowers.

For Nature to her earnest pupils yields
Thoughts in the air, and lessons in the fields,—
And to her eager children doth impart
All the rich secrets of her swelling heart ;
And warmly gives to those, who round her press,
The tender blessing of her fond caress ;
Breathes on their burning souls her potent charm,
And lulls them, cradled in her loving arm,
With melodies of streams, of lowing herds,
Of humming branches, and the voice of birds.

The season smiles ; but what if it should frown ?
No flooding rain our buoyant souls can drown.
Let the hoarse tempest in its fury come,
Our merry voices strike the thunder dumb !
Or flashing wit, from lips to laughter vowed,
Shames back the lightning to its native cloud !

The beast, that no imagination knows,
Burns in the sunshine, shivers in the snows ;
Man, like the ancient Atlas, bears on high,
On his own shoulders, his peculiar sky.
Let but the tear-drops o'er his visage creep,
To him, the very heavens seem to weep.

Or let some pond'rous sorrow weigh him down,
 To him, creation lowers at his frown.
 But, if joy's wreathed chalice he can drain,
 Nature dries up her sympathetic rain ;
 Each tearful globe the light once more refracts,
 And rainbows hover o'er the cataracts.

But dream no more 'mid Nature's lovely scene,
 Lie idly stretched beneath the shadows green,
 No more, my Muse : the sacred day demands
 A wider duty at thy feeble hands.

THE DAY ! Its honors are too often sung,
 Its praises dribble from the nation's tongue.
 And windy patriots blast it with their breath,
 Till you might wish that it could take its death
 Of cold ; and leaving maudlin worlds, like this,
 Accept an early apotheosis,
 And stand for ever, 'mid the spherical chime,
 A frozen moment in the path of time.

THE DAY ! Its name is chanted o'er and o'er,
 From the wild prairie to the ocean's shore.
 Each country tavern boasts its zealous throng,
 Who hail Columbia in discordant song ;
 Each country meeting house its crowd invites
 To hear of tyrants' wrongs, and freemen's rights,
 Of Russia's craft, and England's greedy maw,
 From some young Brutus, who professes law !

On such rude manners, while we all look down,
The country only imitates the town.
Along its streets, in rich imposing show,
See soldier-citizens undaunted go !
Martial in dress, and mild in all beside,
The school-boy's envy, and their sisters' pride,
Fired with fury, and an early glass,
They storm a bar-room, which they scorn to pass,
And, hot with all the toils of their campaign,
Well-iced potations valorously drain ;
And re-enact the inevitable law,
One can't have bricks without their proper straw !
While in loud tumult, and chaotic strife,
Thunders the drum, and whistles shrill the fife,—
While in unwieldy and discordant play,
Th' unmuzzled dogs of war salute the day.
Hark ! the hoarse cannon whose sulphureous breath
Betrays the wonted instrument of death,
And seems to sigh for more than mimic war !
See the swift rocket with its lingering star ;
And, thrown before some rustic bumpkin's feet,
Hear the torpedo crack along the street ;
And the sharp squib exploding in the air,
Affair so noisy, it annoys the fair.

But not the smoke, and not the gaping crowd,
Can dim the day of which the world is proud.

The day that saw our eagle plume his wings
 And strike his talons to the hearts of kings.
 That saw, emblazoned on that famous scroll,
 The written pledge of each unflinching soul,
 The steady hand, that marked the steadfast mind,
 And saw thrones crumble as John Hancock signed.

The poet summoned for a casual rhyme,
 Must make his verses mirror forth the time ;
 Must sketch the central thought that marks his day,
 Relate its growth, and picture its decay.
 The favorite truth or folly of the age,
 That forms the fair Corinna's present rage
 And fills the tomes of the historic sage.
 However wise or weak it be, the thought
 Within the verse's texture must be wrought,
 Until at once, placed side by side, we see
 The age's hieroglyphics and their key.

What then the theme that most demands our page,
 Around what central thought revolves the age ?

Where'er we wander in our daily walk,
 Religion is a staple of our talk.
 The last new form the orthodox erect,
 The last new tenet of the last new sect.

At ball or concert, in the social throng,
 Religious dogmas alternate with song.
 Each beardless urchin, lately taught to read,
 Has his own notion of th' Apostles' Creed.
 Each tender girl, her golden cross will wear,
 And work her cover for the book of prayer.
 Each older maid, by wandering doubt perplexed,
 States her objection, and o'erthrows her text.
 Each gray haired grand-sire owns his novel truth,
 And leaves behind the faith that blessed his youth.
 Religious faith, or doubt, the mystic's dream,
 The zealot's strong-armed engine, is our theme.

Religious faith ! At once the fancy flies,
 Along the range of solemn mysteries,
 Before whose shrines, in deep, unhallowed awe,
 In the stern terror of a broken law,
 Pale Superstition bows its humble neck,
 And tortured Conscience lays its spirit's wreck.
 From the dark dungeons, where among the dead,
 The Inquisition rears its awful head ;
 From the rough rock whereon its victims lie,
 To own their guilt, and then, confessing, die ;
 From the heaped faggots where the martyr stands ;
 From the funereal pile of Eastern lands,
 Where the doomed widow wrings unpitied hands ;
 From the harsh dictates of Geneva's creed,
 Purer in thought, but not more free in deed,

Where old reformers persecute in turn,
 And stern John Calvin bids Servetus burn ;
 From every cruelty and every crime,
 One pretext floats above the wail of Time,
 Religious Faith ! a zeal for sacred things !
 Alike the plea of bishops, and of kings ;
 As each lays on his persecuting rod,
 Snatching God's vengeance from the hands of God !

Religious faith ! Behold its varied seat,
 In Nova Zembla's cold, or Egypt's heat ;
 Alike it finds its consecrated home,
 In leaping minaret, or swelling dome ;
 Where deep devotion pours its pulsing tides,
 On Ganges' banks, or Sinai's rugged sides ;
 In marble temples, of the Grecian mould,
 Or 'mid rude splendor and barbaric gold.

Religious faith ! It hallows every creed,
 Sanctions each tenet, and admits each deed.
 And thro' the world's broad life its influence runs,
 As thro' the solar system flows the sun's.

Not now the faith for which the martyrs died,
 But later growths of intellectual pride.
 Three forms it takes, conspicuous to the view,
 Each to its rapt disciples only true.

Among old Oxford's cloisters, halls, and towers,
 Where square-capped students meet in learning's bowers,
 Pale Pusey in his chamber, damp and chill,
 Ascetic, and dyspeptic, takes his pill.
 And his slow blood along his veins to urge,
 Finds much advantage in a gentle scourge.
 And, on his skin, an influence to exert,
 Feels himself better for a thick, hair shirt.
 Nor can his stomach bear too frequent food,
 Religious fastings seem to do him good ;
 Like Esop's fox, he covers his mishap,
 And gaping pupils suffer at the trap.

The fashion takes ; the quick infection spreads,
 From empty stomachs up to empty heads.
 For multiform transgressions to atone,
 Each solemn curate wears his hempen zone,
 Cuts his hair short, would like to shave his crown,
 And lets his coat below his knees hang down.
 His sleek black waistcoat buttoned to the chin,
 Shuts out dissent and keeps devotion in.
 A spotless neck-cloth somewhat stiff and tight,
 Completes the model of a Puseyite !
 To every inconsistency he runs,
 Reveres the fathers, and has yet no sons,
 In prayers, and fast, and vigil, spends his life,
 And weds a theory instead of wife.

In papal limits finds his largest scope,
 Yet still denies, and still condemns the Pope ;
 But grows uneasy in his present home,
 Begins to wander, and goes on to Rome !

To him a posture seems a thing of weight,
 A point o' th' compass quite a point of state.
 He deems a part more worthy than the whole,
 Upholds a rubric, tho' it cost a soul ;
 And leaving Christian virtues in the lurch,
 Defends a custom, and divides a church.
 Like one, with end too paltry for his means,
 Who fells an oak to make a dish of greens,
 Rouses a tempest to destroy a fly,
 Or stems life's currents for a currant pie !

The second folly in our midst appears,
 The mushroom product of our latest years—
 The Spirit-rappings, which the world receives,
 Laughs, questions, cogitates, and then believes.

Behold the process, which the adept tries,
 From vasty deeps to make the spirit rise !
 A ring is formed, and hand is locked in hand,
 And soon the docile table owns command ;
 Spins on one leg, and runs along the floor,
 Makes leaps, and hops, and fifty antics more

And shows itself possessed of all the wit
 That should be theirs, who round its margin sit.
 Knives, forks, and platters join the merry dance,
 While tongs and shovel o'er the carpet prance.
 Religion stares, philosophy is dumb,
 As from its raps new revelations come,
 Containing hints of seven future states,
 Laid down by tables, and explained by plates !

Such daring folly, O my Muse assail,
 And quite lop off this Fish's floundering tale ;
 And scourge with earnest scorn the fools and knaves
 Who sink or float on Superstition's waves ;
 While, (the fell offshoots of the fatal ring,)
 Insanity and self-destruction spring ;
 While crazy girls suspend them in their garters,
 Like a re-issuing of Fox's Martyrs ;
 Who yesterday clasped hands in frantic flocks,
 Like Mary, trembling at prophetic Knox.

The third great movement springs from human pride,
 A vice, and virtue, walking side by side.

Whate'er your faith, whate'er your Christian light,
 Howe'er devout your prayers at morn and night,
 Howe'er in silence you adore the truth,
 Howe'er to duty you devote your youth;

Howe'er admitted orthodox your creed,
 Howe'er for sacred conscience you would bleed,
 Howe'er you hymn your great Creator's praise,
 In vocal deeds, that lighten others' days,
 One fault avoid, with unremitting care,
 Your scorn of priestly sophism don't declare.
 Submit to forms, howe'er absurd or odd,
 The shabby stucco of the church of God.
 For outraged Christendom indignant damns,
 The man who owns no reverence for shams.

So Parker sinned in old Socinian eyes ;—
 Here the whole trouble in a nut-shell lies—
 He boldly struck at all the false pretense
 Of reading Scriptures in your private sense ;
 Nor e'er devised a theory, and, next,
 To bolster up its weakness, marred a text ;
 And, with no feeling of his church's pulse,
 Took of its creed the logical results,
 And having fairly made his notion out,
 No paltry Scripture caused a single doubt.
 In language bold, and now and then profane,
 He takes the lion fairly by the mane ;
 Trusts all to reason ; not one word to what
 All revelation says is so, or not.
 Some things we know, and other some we trust,
 And Moses *may* be right, but Parker *must* !

The churches tremble, still the man proceeds,
 And cuts, and slashes at the Christian creeds.
 Believes in Christ, denying half he said ;
 Conceives him well intentioned, but misled ;
 Thinks his views large, but tells you o'er and o'er,
 Buddha and Plato said the same before ;
 Holds blunders much that Christ considered truth,
 But pardons all things on the score of youth !

Of modern life, this oracle once said,
 “We think in lightning, while we pray in lead.”
 His prophet’s sons accept this thought of his,
 And chuckle o'er the bold antithesis.
 We too accept : the lightning scathes and sears,
 And rends the monarch of a thousand years.
 To steal the flame, that warmed the Gods on high,
 Prometheus plucked the lightning from the sky ;
 But the electric flashing thought struck back,
 And riveted Prometheus to the rack.
 “We pray in lead :” the waters gently flow,
 That drown each thirst, and wash away each woe.
 Prayer draws the blessing from its fountain head,
 And God’s life-water runs in tubes of lead.

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